

11. Moving In

Soa's POV

I pace back and forth in the library, nervous for his arrival. Dad dropped the bombshell a few hours ago and my head was still reeling.

FLASH BACK

"What!" I say, getting up from the breakfast table, the news of Mateo's arrival later today making Solana purr with joy. "Why is he coming here!"

I still hadn't stopped thinking about him since our last encounter at my birthday party.

"I'll kill him," he had said and I hung onto those words for hours after he left the roof, every cell in my body screaming at me to kiss him. To not let him go. To claim him as mine.

I couldn't bare the thought of him being here with my wedding just a few months away. My mind would explode at the thought of being with another man that wasn't him. How could I possible survive these next few months if he was so close to me?

"Mateo is..." my father searches for the right word. "...Struggling to cope with the responsibilities of being a leader. What better way to teach him than with his future Queen?" He smiles as if it's the most obvious answer. "Besides, didn't you say you wanted to have a friend? It'll be nice to be homeschooled with someone else for a change."

"You mean he's going to be homeschooled? With me? As in together? In the same room? For hours at a time?" I'm on the verge of a panic attack.

This can't be happening.

"Oh come on, mija. It can't be that bad, can it?" Father asks, mischief in his eyes. "I know it's a bit unexpected but having the Altamirano's close can be a good thing, especially now that they have a healer amongst them," he adds. "You'll be needing a gamma soon and who better than a silver wolf?"

END FLASH BACK

That was four hours ago and he was set to arrive within the next 20 minutes. Afraid I might be wearing a hole into the oorboards from pacing so much, I force myself into my desk and open up my history book. But after another 10 minutes of aimlessly reading the same sentence over and over again, I close my book and stare at ring on my nger.

Julian had given it to me shortly after my birthday and I felt bile rise up in my throat every time I looked at it.

Take that off! Solana snarls. Don't wear that in front of our mate!

I look down at the ring on my nger. It was a beautiful Princess cut diamond with smaller diamonds on its circumference. Any girl would be happy with such a ring. I slip it off, rushing off to my room to stuff it in my jewelry box when I see the car pull up in the drive way from my bedroom window.

Crap!

I change my slippers for some sandals before bolting down stairs. Solana squeals excitedly when we catch a glimpse of him at the door with his father. Taking a few deep breaths and ung up my hair, I slowly make my way to the door to greet our guests, trying my best to look graceful despite my racing heart.

When our eyes meet brie, however, it's as if the entire world stops and all that exists is him and I. Any coherent thought leaves my brain and all I can do is offer a simple smile. Mateo's grey eyes are a storm of emotions and I feel my heart sink when I sense his sadness and anguish. He did not want to be here and it hurt. He and Alpha Manuel bow politely in acknowledgement. Unsure what to do with myself, I dget with the hem of my dress.

"Soa, would you show Mateo to his room? Alpha Manuel and I have some things to discuss." My father offers.

I nod at my Dad, glancing at Mateo who stares at his own father with pleading eyes. When his father says nothing, Mateo purses his lips, grabbing his suitcases and walking towards me.

"Lead the way, your Highness," he says coldly.

My expectations dropping by the second, I turn on my heel and lead him up to the second oor. Hacienda Reyes is a large property built in the time of the Spanish conquest. The two story house has 17 bedrooms, 2 living rooms, 2 dining rooms, a game room and library. At the center of the house is a beautiful courtyard complete with a fountain while a balcony wraps around a large portion of the house, connecting one of the living rooms to the library.

I stop in front of a door and open it for him. "This is it," I say, timidly. "This will be your room. There's a bathroom over there for you." I point to a door and he nods. "Umm you can leave your stuff here and I'll show you the rest of the house."

"Thanks but I'm not interested in what the rest of this gold prison looks like," he says, pushing past me and setting his things down on his bed. "I'm just here to do my time and go home."

Solana whimpers at the harshness of his voice.

"Right," I say, wringing my hands nervously. "Umm well... I ... Training starts at 6 am and ends at 9 am. From there, we have class from 10 to 4 pm. The Alpha briengs start at 5:30 sharp so -"

"Argh," he growls, knocking his suit case onto the ground and pushing his hands into his hair. "No offense but could you leave? I would much rather just be alone right now. I don't care about the schedule."

My mouth goes dry and I close my mouth shut to keep from screaming at him.

I knew this arrangement as inconvenient but did he have to be a complete ass?

"As you wish," I reply coldly, slamming the door shut behind me.

Mateo's POV

I feel bad for kicking the Princess out. She was obviously trying to make me feel welcomed even if it was just a farce, but I need some space. I hated being here. There was no beach in Mante. No cool morning sea breeze to make you feel alive. Just damp earth.

And worst of all, I hated leaving things the way I did with Emiliano and Valentina. They were both still pretty shook up from what happened yesterday and Valentina refused to speak to me. I resented her silence but I knew I deserved it. I wasn't there for her when she needed me most and it was eating me up inside.

I hated seeing her so defeated. Emiliano was no better. While he had forgiven me, I hated to see those bruises on his face. Being a healer meant he could not heal his own body and it would be weeks before he would fully recovered from the injuries that asshole gave him.

Exhausted from the journey and my inner turmoil, I unpack my things and settle in.

Deeply enthralled in my work, I almost don't hear the faint knocking at my door. When I answer, I nd a short, stout woman in her early forties looking up at me, a stack of books in her hands.

"Hello, Mr. Altamirano. I'm Cassandra, the maid. The Princess sent these for you. They're the books you'll be needing for school," she says, extending out the books for me.

I take them and set the on the small desk by the window.

"Her Highness also told me to give you this," the woman produces a small slip of paper and hands it to me. "Its a list of assignments due Monday by the instructor. You might want to get a jump on those. If you need anything, please don't hesitate to ask."

"I'll keep that in mind."

"Dinner is at 6," she says before scurrying off.

I remain in my bedroom until dinner is called. I nervously make my way down stairs only to realize I have no idea where the dining room is. After serval minutes of me aimlessly roaming the halls, I bump straight into the Princess.

"Oh, I'm sorry," I mutter as I bow apologetically and grab her by the shoulders to make sure she's okay.

She shrugs off my hands and walks me past me without so much as a second glance. I trail after her, calling her name.

"Princess!"

She walks even faster until she's almost sprinting down the hall but I catch her by the arm.

Big mistake.

She whips around in a nanosecond and grabs my throat with her tiny right hand, her left hand a ball of ames. Her amber eyes are scathing hot, practically glowing with rage.

"Do not touch me," she growls at me, her voice trembling slightly. "Not for the rest of your miserable life."

I don't know what possesses me to reach a hand to the arm currently gripping my throat but I gently wrap my ngers around her wrist. The gesture confuses her and for a split second, she loosens her grip.

"I'm sorry," I whisper, catching her off guard.

A pained look ickers in her eyes before she nally lets go.

She spins on her heel, muttering something under her breath.

"Follow me."

I do as I'm told, following her whilst taking in the beauty of the home. Every room we pass has unique personality. After a few moments of silence, we hear chattering and nd ourselves in the dining room.

The king and queen sit at the head of the table, several other men and woman occupying the other seats. Soa stands before the table and bows before taking a seat and I mimic her motions, taking the only seat left directly across from her.

As I sit, the king raises his glass for a small toast, welcoming me to his home and introducing me to the people at the table. To the king's left is his Beta Guillermo and his wife while the Royal gamma, Roberto and his wife sit beside Soa the Queen. To my left, sit General Eugenio Cortez and his wife Maria.

General Cortez has a dominant aura surrounding him and I can tell he leads his troops with an iron st. He would be training me on Monday and I was not looking forward to it.

When I'm introduced as an Altamirano, the entire table leans forward in intrigue. Our reputation as one of the strongest silver wolf clans precedes me and I hated it.

Why couldn't I just blend in? I hadn't done anything extraordinary since sitting down and yet I'm being treated like I'm some incredible being!

"So, young man," The Kings says. "Your father tells me you have quite the spirit."

Spirit? That's what he called it?

"I'm not sure what you mean, your Majesty," I frown. "I like my freedom but doesn't everyone else?"

"Freedom is an illusion," the General says. "You can do nothing with freedom. It makes you lazy. You must have a strict, rigid structure to motivate people to move forward."

Yup, I'm going to hate Monday.

"I disagree," I say, taking a bite of my tacos. "Freedom gives you the liberty to seek out your passion and not better motivator exists than doing something you love."

"That is a interesting point of view," the king says. "Very... human."

"Perhaps," I shrug. "Is that a problem?"

"Not at all. Humans are very powerful creatures when they want to be," the king smiles. "But I wonder... if your passion leads you astray from your family and your responsibilities to your pack, is it really worth seeking?"

"Families aren't all they're called to be," I reply. "Sometimes the family you are given is not necessarily one you should keep in your life."

I was blessed to have two parents who loved and respected each other but not everyone was so lucky. Gabriel's father was a low life piece of s**t who liked to beat his wife and treated her like a slave. I've spent many nights consoling him or helping him and his sister seek refuge on our territory when his father got out of control. I even drove his mother to the hospital when she miscarried their child after his father beat her relentlessly. We stayed with her that whole night, hiding her away from his wrath. When he came looking for her, we made sure he never found her. We helped her escape

"You are not wrong, unfortunately. Still, if given a choice, would you choose freedom over your family then?" The king asked.

"Freedom and family are not mutually exclusive."

"But for the freedom you seek, they are. So I ask again, who would you choose?"

"Freedom."

"Why?" The king asks, leaning forward a bit, as if every word I said mattered to him.

"Because even if I loved my family, my heart and soul would be yearning for something they can not give me. I would live a life unfulfilled and that is no life I wish for myself," I reply and the king smiles knowingly.

"So then you could never be truly free," the Princess interjects. "If you choose freedom, your heart would yearn for the love of you family and you would live a life in loneliness. That's no life to live either."

The king leans back in his chair, seemingly satished with the turn of events.

"You must nd balance in all aspects of your life to live a life truly worth living." He pushes back his chair and stands.

We're on our feet instantly as he sets his napkin down.

"This has truly been enlightening," he smiles. "You speak your mind clearly and without fear, an amiable quality for any future leader. I respect that and I hope your stay here only helps to nourish your growth as person."

He bows for me, bidding me a good night as he turns to leave with his wife in hand. I remain stunned as the remaining wolves bow as well, the Princess included, before they too excuse themselves until only Soa and I remain.

She clears he throat. "Ahem, well I'll leave you alone," she says, xing her dress. "Goodnight."

"Soa."

But she leaves before I get another word in.

My mind is restless as I prepare for bed and when 1 am rolls around, I nd myself wide awake in bed as I process the past 24 hours. After another 30 mins of tossing and turning, I nally get out of bed and decide a midnight snack is in order.

Since I refused a tour with the Princess, I once again become lost in the endless maze of hallways. When I stumble into the what appears to be the library, I'm surprised to see the princes sitting out in the cold balcony with nothing but a lmsy night gown on.

I try to tip toe away when her voice stops me in my tracks.

"You don't have to leave," she murmurs, pulling her knees to her chest and keeping her gaze on the dark world outside. "You can stay if you want."

"I didn't mean to bother you," I mutter, walking out onto the balcony.

She shrugs. "You've bothered me since the day we met. Why should you stop now?"

Ouch.

I sit on the chair beside her and from the corner of my eye, I notice her roll an engagement ring between her ngers.

Had she been wearing that before?

"You're still going to marry that jerk?" I snort.

"Why are you here?" she asks avoiding my question.

"Couldn't sleep," I sigh.

"That's not what I meant," she frowns.

I knew what she meant. I just didn't want to talk about it and when I don't answer, she seems to understand.

"That's okay," she says quietly, staring at her bare feet. "Some things are better kept to yourself."

"You're really going to marry Julian?" I ask again. "After what he did?"

She goes quiet for a minute and I see a world of sadness ash in her eyes before gets to her feet. "You have a good night, Mateo."